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ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 230923Z MAR 06
FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0069
INFO RUEHZN/ENVIRONMENT SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COLLECTIVE
RUEHHI/AMEMBASSY HANOI 0902
RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA 5281
RUEHNAG/AMCONSUL NAGOYA 5295
RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA 7911
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE 8428
RUEHKSO/AMCONSUL SAPPORO 6463
RUEHRC/USDA FAS WASHDC 8211
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TOKYO 001529

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AIAG AMBASSADOR LANGE
DEPT FOR OES/IHA SINGER AND FENDRICK
DEPT FOR EAP/J
USDA PASS TO APHIS
HHS PASS TO CDC
HHS FOR OGHA STEIGER, BHAT AND ELVANDER

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: TBIO KFLU KSTH ECON PREL SOCI WHO JA
SUBJECT: AVIAN INFLUENZA: JAPAN WEEKLY REPORT MARCH 23

REF: A. 05 STATE 153802

1B. TOKYO 1397 AND PREVIOUS
1C. 05 TOKYO 6538
1D. TOKYO 1112

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11. The following is an update on avian influenza (AI) developments in Japan for the period March 16 to March 23. No human or animal outbreaks of H5N1 avian influenza were reported in Japan during the past week.

-- New Domestic AI Poultry Vaccine Developed --

12. On March 21, a research group from Hokkaido University announced that it was successful in developing the first domestic avian influenza vaccine for use in chickens. After only one injection of the vaccine, the researchers found that the level of antibodies in the chickens grew exponentially after two weeks. The group hopes that this new vaccine will be more effective and quicker than earlier versions. They also hope that it will offer a back-up alternative to the vaccines being currently imported by the GOJ from overseas sources.

13. The research group used genetic portions from the H5N2 and H7N1 viruses discovered in Mongolia and created a new non-virulent and non-infectious strain of H5N1. To see if the new strain could function as a vaccine, the researchers injected it into four-week-old chickens and then looked for the presence of proteins specific to the influenza virus. They were successful in detecting antibodies. To further test for the new vaccine's efficacy, the group injected two populations of chickens with an H5N1 strain detected earlier in Yamaguchi Prefecture. All of the control group chickens died within two weeks, and but all of the inoculated chickens that received the new vaccine survived. Finally, the researchers were able to confirm that enough antibodies remained in the chickens six months later to protect them from further infection. The group plans to apply for Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries

(MAFF) approval for the vaccine later this fall.

-- Interior Lung More Susceptible to AI --

¶4. A joint research group from Tokyo University's Institute for Medical Sciences led by Professor Yoshihiro Kawaoka and Tottori University discovered that a part of the interior lung is particularly susceptible to infection by the avian influenza virus. As a result, the group learned that the virus could infect anyone. Previously, some thought that due to individual differences, certain individuals might be more predisposed to infection than others. The group learned that a large amount of receptors that allow the virus to bind are found in the alveoli. Because the virus multiplies in the interior portions of the lungs where the higher body temperatures are more suitable for avian influenza replication, the researchers suggested that it might be difficult to pass the virus from person to person through coughing and sneezing. The results of the study are to be reported in detail in Nature Magazine.

-- "Only Clean Blood, Please" --

¶5. On March 20, the Mito District Public Prosecutor's Office brought charges against two employees of the IKN Egg Farm Company and three veterinarians involved in the tampering of avian influenza related poultry tests in Ibaraki Prefecture. The court decided to suspend sentencing for two of the employees who are charged with complicity in obstructing the prefecture's investigations. However, authorities rearrested all five employees again on the same day on suspicion that they were in breach of their duty to report outbreaks of infectious diseases in poultry to authorities under the Domestic Animal Infectious Diseases Control Law. During the prosecution, authorities learned that the company's former chairman had ordered his employees to "provide only clean blood" for the

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inspections. (For details on the case see reftels C and D).

SCHIEFFER